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FireSmart—a ‘Shared Responsibility’

British Columbia is experiencing a serious and sustained trend of extreme wildfire behaviour and extreme fire events, particularly in the wildland-urban interface where developed areas border on forests or grasslands.

More human activity and development is taking place in or near forests, resulting in greater potential consequences for the socio-economic health and safety of citizens and visitors. Climate change impacts are more evident in terms of increased wildfire size and severity, and longer fire seasons.

British Columbia makes up 9.5% of Canada’s land mass and has a population of only 4.9 million people, which is largely concentrated along the Canada-U.S. border. (The Coastal Fire Centre covers 12.8 million hectares). The province contains about 60.3 million hectares of forest, all of which can be exposed to wildfires at varying intervals and intensities.

Wildfires will occur. They’re simply a fact of life in British Columbia.

Since we cannot stop all wildfires, we need the public’s assistance to prevent human-caused wildfires and mitigating potential damage

when a wildfire does occur.

Here on the coast, we have a situation where dense, large-treed forests traditionally retain moisture in the understory (below the forest canopy) and in the forest floor. The biomass (i.e. the amount of fuel that’s available to burn) is immense. With higher summer temperatures and longer dry periods, the risk of severe coastal fire behaviour is increasing.

The FireSmart program is based on the reality that wildfires will occur, and that we all

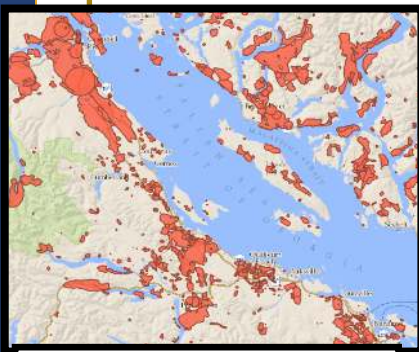
must live with and prepare for this certainty. The FireSmart program uses preventative measures to reduce wildfire threats to British Columbians and their communities, while balancing the beneficial effects of fire on the landscape (such as rejuvenating forests and increasing biodiversity).

The key premise of FireSmart is that preparing for wildfire threats is a “shared responsibility.” Local governments, First Nations, forestry companies, industry, the B.C. government and members of the public all have a responsibility to reduce the damaging effects of wildfire. Communities and neighbourhoods can make a difference by using FireSmart techniques, while governments (local and provincial) have responsibilities related to planning, preparedness, urban development policy and legislative changes.

To learn more about FireSmart, visit: <https://firesmartbc.ca>

For specific questions about the FireSmart program, contact:

- info@firesmartbc.ca
- your local fire department
- the BC Wildfire Service zone office nearest you



Coastal—Historical Fire Perimeters



qathat Regional District in the Powell River area undertaking a fuel mitigation project at Penticton Trails.

To obtain copies of the FireSmart Homeowner’s Manual to share with your community go to: <https://firesmartbc.ca/resource-ordering-form/>.

The Seven Disciplines of FireSmart



Education: raising awareness of wildfire risks and opportunities for prevention and mitigation

Educating the public about the advantages of FireSmart is an important aspect of the program. Once members of the public learn about the program, we encourage them to pass this knowledge on to friends and neighbours, and use it to influence local government decisions in their area.



Vegetation management: managing fuels on the landscape through effective treatments and using the best available science

Vegetation management not only refers to conducting prescribed burning. It also covers a multitude of technical forestry methods and includes wildfire risk management plans. Public support for various fuel treatments is key to managing and maintaining healthy forests in B.C.



Legislation and planning: effective development of policy and legislation related to forestry management practices, integrated land use planning, compliance and enforcement programs, and legal orders

The BC Wildfire Service is guided by legislation, so altering or enacting new legislation to help reduce or mitigate wildfire risks is important. This discipline also addresses enforcement. Open fire prohibitions are one way to reduce potential wildfire starts during periods of high fire risk.



Development considerations: using the best available science and technology to promote effective local government and land use planning that supports community wildfire resiliency and infrastructure survivability

This discipline addresses some overarching building and land use planning objectives, including how a community is built and what building products are used in houses. How can community plans be tested to make sure that the best available science is used when developing communities, particularly those that straddle a wildland-urban interface area? This discipline often works in concert with the legislation and planning discipline, since the government

can enact building code changes, development policies and infrastructure bylaws specifically to address issues in the wildland-urban interface.



Interagency cooperation: promote intra-ministry and inter-agency collaboration to better support wildfire preparedness, prevention, response and recovery

The BC Wildfire Service works with stakeholders and First Nations to develop efficient and cohesive partnerships for preventing or mitigating wildfire risks. This work can involve meetings, specific projects or inter-agency training.



Emergency planning: encourage and participate in emergency planning by combining local knowledge with wildfire management expertise

The BC Wildfire Service supports local emergency planning and it works with ministries, communities and First Nations to develop appropriate emergency procedures in response to wildfire threats. The BC Wildfire Service provides expert advice for developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), participates in emergency planning exercises and offers its expertise to assist with recovery and rehabilitation. Does your community have a CWPP?



Cross-training: participate and promote cross-training opportunities that support the delivery of the FireSmart program

The BC Wildfire Service supports and takes part in cross-training exercises with other fire departments, First Nations communities, local governments, industry and others. This may include tabletop exercises, scenarios, fuel management and rehabilitation/recovery projects.

For more information about the FireSmart program, visit <https://firesmartbc.ca/>

Wildfire Community Preparedness Day—May 4, 2019

What it is?

Wildfire Community Preparedness Day is an annual FireSmart campaign that encourages people to come together on a single day and take action to increase their communities' wildfire resiliency.

Getting involved with volunteer efforts to keep your community safe is a great way of observing Wildfire Community Preparedness Day. Put on some gardening gloves and help clear away materials that could spark or fuel a fire.

Participation in Wildfire Community Preparedness Day projects helps create a sense of community where neighbors look out for each other. These projects can also strengthen relationships between residents and local fire departments, land management agencies, community leaders and elected officials.

It's also a great day to teach your children about wildfire dangers, and the effects that careless behaviour can have on wildlife and forest ecosystems.

Communities can receive funding through FireSmart Canada to sponsor Wildfire Community Preparedness Day events. Was your community one of them?

Please forward any photos of your event to FORHPRP.INFOCO@gov.bc.ca

**Local Events Near You:****Sproat Lake Fire Department**

May 4 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Location: 9346 Bomber Base Road, 9346 Bomber Base Road
Port Alberni, British Columbia V9Y 8Z3

Regional Municipality of Whistler (RMOW)

FireSmart crew hosting a walk along the Valley Trail

May 5 @ 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

FireSmart Community Chipper Days

Sundays from May 6 to June 10

Saturna Island

Saturday, May 26 @ 10:00am to 2:00pm

Event Location: Emergency Services Building #1

Langford Emergency Preparedness Expo

Sunday, May 5 @ 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Juan de Fuca Rec Centre, 1767 Island Highway

Nanoose Bay, Regional District of Nanaimo

Saturday, May 4 @ 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Nanoose Fire Hall, 2471 Nanoose Road

Check with your local government for an event near you!

Prevention Blog

As the new senior wildfire officer for Prevention in the Coastal Fire Centre, this spring has been very busy time, but I wanted to share my observations in my new role. It's been a relatively dry spring on the coast and we have seen multiple fires escape from backyard burning that required both BC Wildfire Service and local fire department response. These types of fires are avoidable and can be very costly for the person who mishandles a burning substance. We work with our Natural Resource Officer partners to follow up on each of these occurrences. You may ask, "If backyard burning can cause wildfires, why doesn't the BC Wildfire Service or the local government just restrict open burning?" Well, we also know that spring is a great time to follow [FireSmart BC](#) recommendations to clean up your property and prune your vegetation, so we want to make sure the public can use all tools at their disposal — including backyard burning — to reduce this hazard. This opportunity won't last forever though. We regularly review Coastal Fire Centre weather station data and when we reach a predetermined level of dryness, I'll recommend that the fire centre manager restrict open burning until safe burning conditions return, typically in the fall. Thanks for reading, and have a look around to see what is happening for Community Wildfire Preparedness Day (May 4) in your neck of the woods.

Alan Berry, RFT

Senior Wildfire Officer- Prevention

**Fires to Date
Since
April 1, 2019**

Total 13

Lightning 0

Person 13

**Number of
fires since
April 26, 2019**

Total 6

Lightning 0

Person 6

**Fire Danger
Rating today**



Current Prohibitions
(within BCWS
jurisdictional area)

None
Check with your
local government
for burn bylaws in
your area.

Coastal Fire Centre

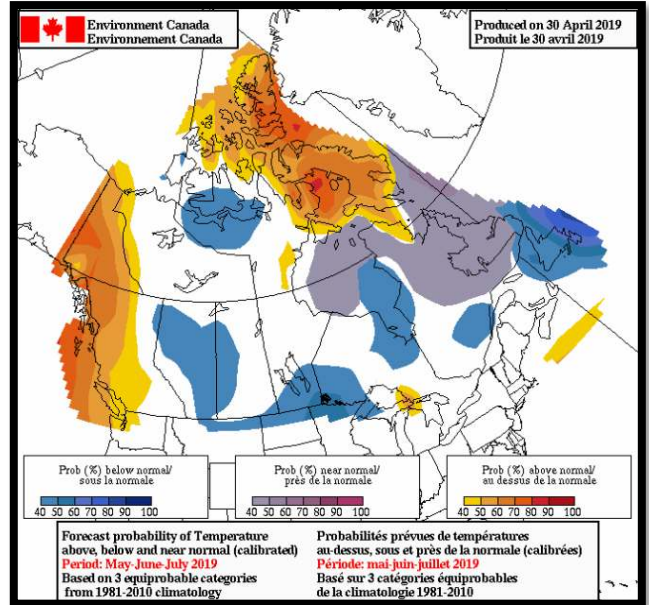
**Wildfire
news**

Coastal Seasonal Outlook

According to Environment Canada, the seasonal outlook for the Coastal Fire Centre is for a slightly warmer-than-normal April to June, and warmer-than-normal temperatures from June to August.

According to our fire weather technician, a Pacific ridge should dominate over the west coast for much of the summer. A westerly or northwesterly flow should prevail most (not all) of the time. This pattern often supports frequent or prolonged [outflow events](#) on the coast, with occasional wind and lightning events are possible when the ridge breaks down.

The severity of this fire season, however, will depend on local, short-range weather patterns, including the amount and timing of rain, and how that relates to thunderstorms and wind events.



**Long-range forecasts are not wholly reliable, but they are used by the fire centre to prepare for possible wildfire activity. For more information about weather forecasts, visit: https://weather.gc.ca/saisons/prob_e.html*

Weather

SYNOPSIS: (Today-tomorrow) Well established and stable weather pattern with an upper level high pressure ridge centred over the Gulf of Alaska and a shallow surface trough over the BC interior. The high level ridge brings a cool northerly wind with some moisture and instability to areas east of the Coast Mountains and once in a while a few clouds do drift over into Coastal zones. One such shower is observed at this time over the Fraser Valley but so far the rainfall is insignificant. No major instability is expected and thus no chance of lightning. A light pressure gradient today will become a moderate inflow pattern as the afternoon temperatures increase. Some gustiness is likely reaching the 30 km/h range for a few hours in mid-afternoon. The band of showers currently over the mountains is drifting southward and most areas clear in the afternoon allowing fair solar heating and temperatures climbing to the high teens and even a few low 20s. There is enough moisture available so that the afternoon warmth regenerates a few shower clouds but mostly only over the mountains. Mostly clear skies tonight with a return to near normal

lows and good recovery. Much the same pattern and forecast tomorrow with little chance of showers, no chance of lightning and temperatures again climbing to about 5 degrees above the normal. Continued moderate or slightly lower than normal humidity for Friday and another day with a light to briefly moderate inflow breeze.

OUTLOOK: (Saturday-Monday) The ridge remains nearly stationary over the weekend with little change in local weather. By Monday the forecast models show the ridge edging closer to the coast which brings warmer afternoon highs and the start of an outflow pattern.

6 TO 10 DAY: (next week) Its Tuesday and Wednesday next week that sees the upper ridge suddenly pop up over the coast and settle in over Coastal zones. An inverted outflow surface trough forms meaning areas of poor overnight humidity recovery and widespread afternoon very warm temperatures along with relative humidity dropping not the teens. Winds remain quite light.